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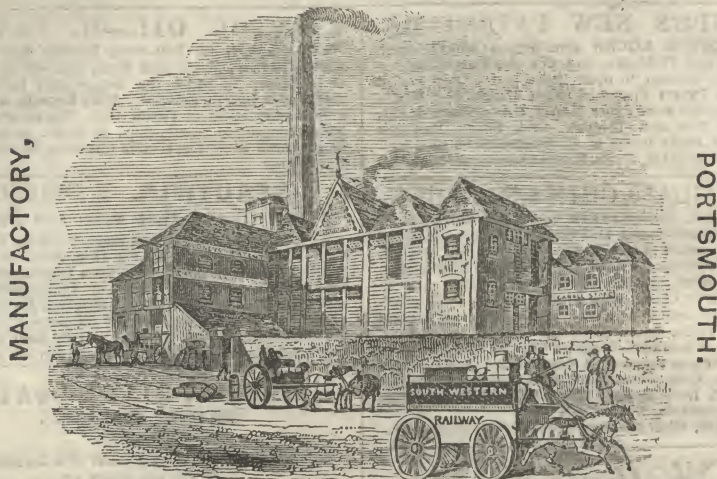


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Table Spoons.....	16 6 doz.	1 1 0 doz.	1 10 0 doz.	Egg Spoons	7 0 doz.	15 0 Gilt	24 0 Gilt
„ Forks „	16 6 „	1 1 0 „	1 10 0 „	Gravy „	3 6 ea.	4 6 ea.	7 6 ea.
Dessert Spoons.....	12 6 „	16 6 „	1 5 0 „	Sauce Ladles.....	1 9 „	2 3 „	3 9 „
„ Forks „	12 6 „	16 6 „	1 5 0 „	Soup „	6 6 „	8 0 „	11 0 „
Tea Spoons.....	5 6 „	8 0 „	13 6 „	Sugar Tongs.....	1 3 „	1 9 „	3 0 „
Salt Ditto.....	6 0 „	12 0 Gilt	18 0 „	Fish Knives.....	5 6 „	8 6 „	12 6 „
Mustard Ditto...	6 0 „	12 0 Gilt	13 6 „	Skewers	4d. in.		6d. in.



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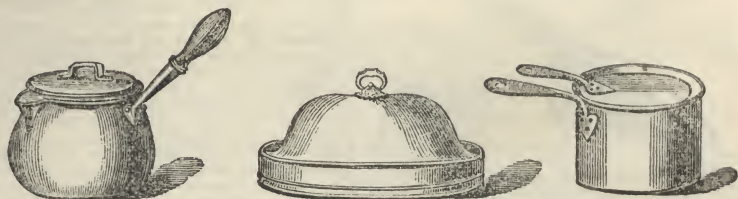
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
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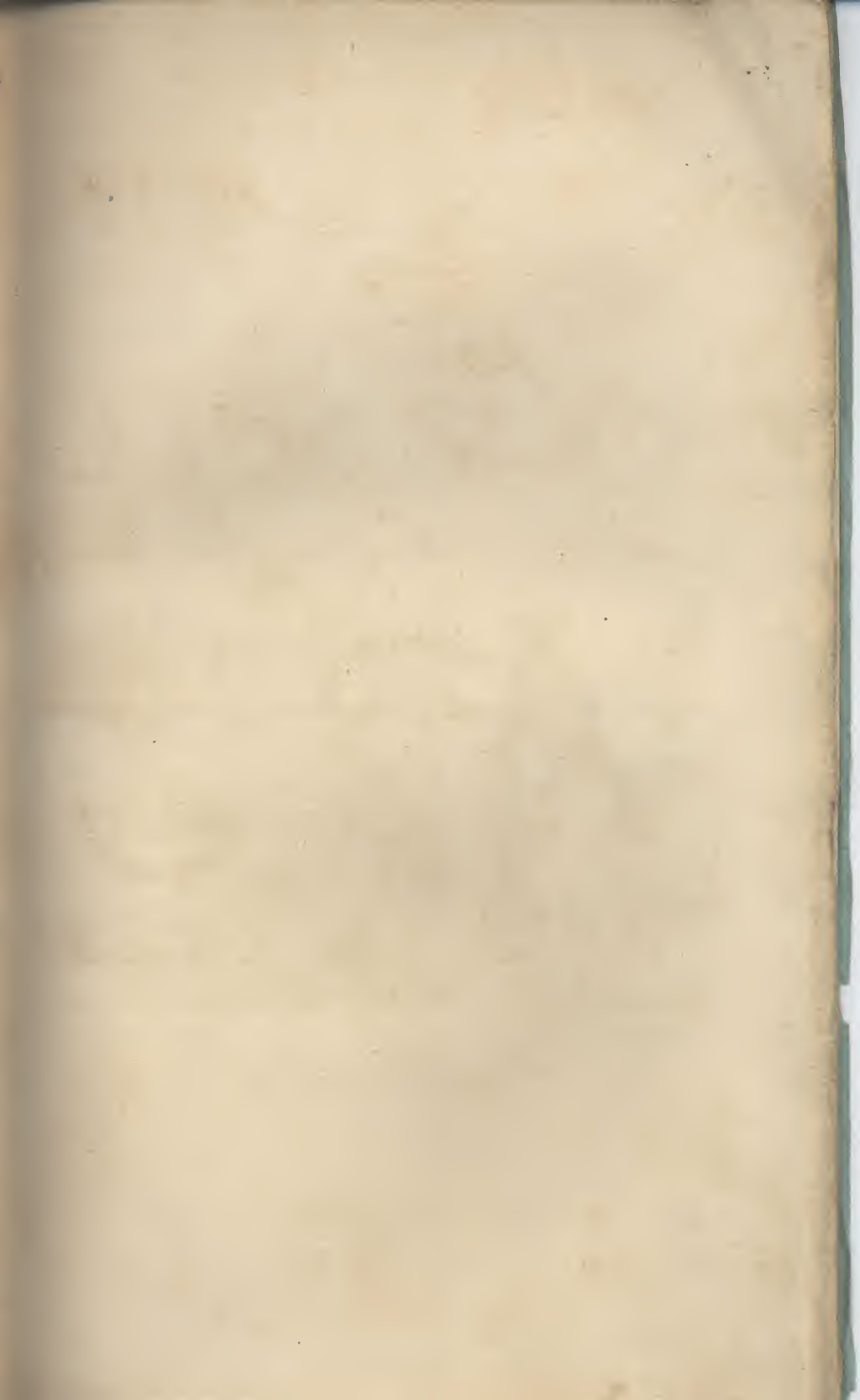
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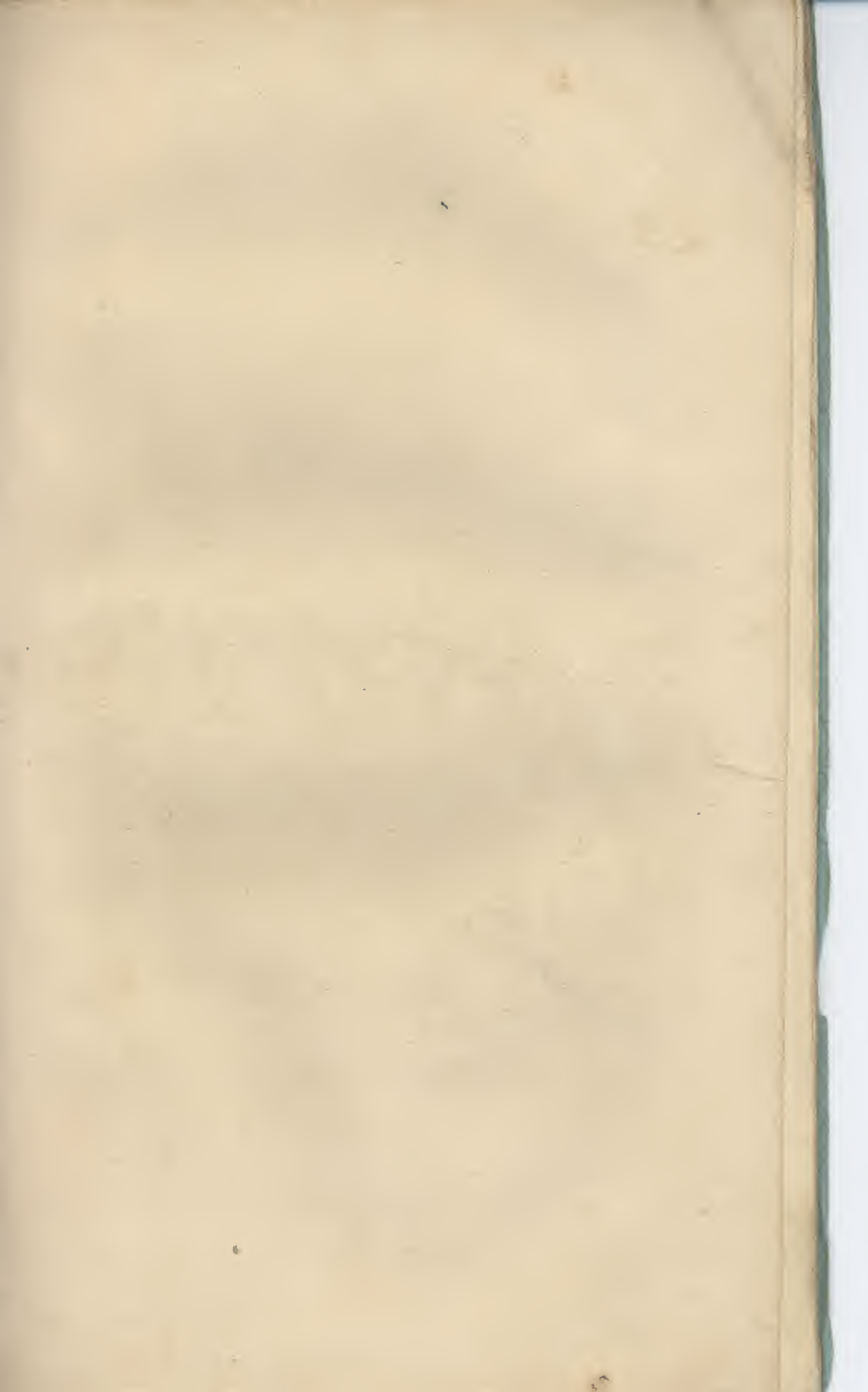
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Mr. Pickens announces himself in the shield of Virtue.





Mr. Jonas exhibits his presence of mind.

CHAPTER XLII.

CONTINUATION OF THE ENTERPRISE OF MR. JONAS AND HIS FRIEND.

THE Doctor's prognostication in reference to the weather, was speedily verified. Although the weather was not a patient of his, and no third party had required him to give an opinion on the case, the quick fulfilment of his prophecy may be taken as an instance of his professional tact ; for unless the threatening aspect of the night had been perfectly plain and unmistakeable, Mr. Jobling would never have compromised his reputation by delivering any sentiments on the subject. He used this principle in Medicine with too much success, to be unmindful of it in his commonest transactions.

It was one of those hot, silent, nights, when people sit at windows, listening for the thunder which they know will shortly break ; when they recall dismal tales of hurricanes and earthquakes ; and of lonely travellers on open plains, and lonely ships at sea struck by lightning. Lightning flashed and quivered on the black horizon even now ; and hollow murmurings were in the wind, as though it had been blowing where the thunder rolled, and still was charged with its exhausted echoes. But the storm, though gathering swiftly, had not yet come up ; and the prevailing stillness was the more solemn, from the dull intelligence that seemed to hover in the air, of noise and conflict afar off.

It was very dark ; but in the murky sky there were masses of cloud which shone with a lurid light, like monstrous heaps of copper that had been heated in a furnace, and were growing cold. These had been advancing steadily and slowly, but they were now motionless, or nearly so ; and as the carriage clattered round the corners of the streets, it passed, at every one, a knot of persons, who had come there—many from their houses close at hand, without hats—to look up at that quarter of the sky. And now a very few large drops of rain began to fall : and thunder rumbled in the distance.

Jonas sat in a corner of the carriage, with his bottle resting on his knee, and gripped as tightly in his hand, as if he would have ground its neck to powder if he could. Instinctively attracted by the night, he had laid aside the pack of cards upon the cushion ; and with the same involuntary impulse, so intelligible to both of them as not to occasion a remark on either side, his companion had extinguished the lamp. The front glasses were down ; and they sat looking silently out upon the gloomy scene before them.

They were clear of London : or as clear of it as travellers can be, whose way lies on the Western Road, within a stage of that enormous city. Occasionally, they encountered a foot-passenger, hurrying to the nearest place of shelter ; or some unwieldy cart proceeding onward at a heavy trot, with the same end in view. Little clusters of such vehicles were gathered round the stable-yard or baiting-place of every way-side

tavern; while their drivers watched the weather from the doors and open windows, or made merry within. Everywhere the people were disposed to bear each other company, rather than sit alone; so that groups of watchful faces seemed to be looking out upon the night *and them*, from almost every house they passed.

It may appear strange that this should have disturbed Jonas, or rendered him uneasy: but it did. After muttering to himself, and often changing his position, he drew up the blind on his side of the carriage, and turned his shoulder sulkily towards it. But he neither looked at his companion, nor broke the silence which prevailed between them, and which had fallen so suddenly upon himself, by addressing a word to him.

The thunder rolled, the lightning flashed; the rain poured down like Heaven's wrath. Surrounded at one moment by intolerable light, and at the next by pitchy darkness, they still pressed forward on their journey. Even when they arrived at the end of the stage, and might have tarried, they did not; but ordered horses out immediately. Nor had this any reference to some five minutes' lull, which at that time seemed to promise a cessation of the storm. They held their course as if they were impelled and driven by its fury. Although they had not exchanged a dozen words, and might have tarried very well, they seemed to feel, by joint consent, that onward they must go.

Louder and louder the deep thunder rolled, as through the myriad halls of some vast temple in the sky; fiercer and brighter became the lightning; more and more heavily the rain poured down. The horses (they were travelling now with a single pair), plunged and started from the rills of quivering fire that seemed to wind along the ground before them: but there these two men sat, and forward they went as if they were led on by an invisible attraction.

The eye, partaking of the quickness of the flashing light, saw in its every gleam a multitude of objects which it could not see at steady noon in fifty times that period. Bells in steeples, with the rope and wheel that moved them; ragged nests of birds in cornices and nooks; faces full of consternation in the tilted waggons that came tearing past, their frightened teams ringing out a warning which the thunder drowned; harrows and ploughs left out in fields; miles upon miles of hedge-divided country, with the distant fringe of trees as obvious as the scarecrow in the beanfield close at hand: in a trembling, vivid, flickering instant, everything was clear and plain: then came a flush of red into the yellow light; a change to blue; a brightness so intense that there was nothing else but light: and then the deepest and profoundest darkness.

The lightning, being very crooked and very dazzling, may have presented or assisted a curious optical illusion, which suddenly rose before the startled eyes of Montague in the carriage, and as rapidly disappeared. He thought he saw Jonas with his hand lifted, and the bottle clenched in it like a hammer, making as if he would aim a blow at his head. At the same time he observed (or so believed), an expression in his face; a combination of the unnatural excitement he had shown all day, with

a wild hatred and fear which might have rendered a Wolf a less terrible companion.

He uttered an involuntary exclamation, and called to the driver, who brought his horses to a stop with all speed.

It could hardly have been as he supposed, for although he had not taken his eyes off his companion, and had not seen him move, he sat reclining in his corner as before.

"What's the matter?" said Jonas. "Is that your general way of waking out of your sleep?"

"I could swear," returned the other, "that I have not closed my eyes!"

"When you have sworn it," said Jonas, composedly, "we had better go on again, if you have only stopped for that."

He uncorked the bottle with the help of his teeth; and putting it to his lips, took a long draught.

"I wish we had never started on this journey. This is not," said Montague, recoiling instinctively, and speaking in a voice that betrayed his agitation: "this is not a night to travel in."

"Ecod! you're right there," returned Jonas: "and we shouldn't be out in it but for you. If you hadn't kept me waiting all day, we might have been at Salisbury by this time; snug abed and fast asleep. What are we stopping now for?"

His companion put his head out of window for a moment, and drawing it in again, observed (as if that were his cause of anxiety), that the boy was drenched to the skin.

"Serve him right," said Jonas. "I'm glad of it. What the devil are we stopping now, for? Are you going to spread him out to dry?"

"I have half a mind to take him inside," observed the other with some hesitation.

"Oh! thankee!" said Jonas. "We don't want any damp boys here: especially a young imp like him. Let him be where he is. He aint afraid of a little thunder and lightning, I dare say; whoever else is. Go on, Driver! We had better have *him* inside perhaps," he muttered with a laugh; "and the horses!"

"Don't go too fast," cried Montague to the postillion; "and take care how you go. You were nearly in the ditch when I called to you."

This was not true; and Jonas bluntly said so, as they moved forward again. Montague took little or no heed of what he said, but repeated that it was not a night for travelling, and showed himself, both then and afterwards, unusually anxious.

From this time, Jonas recovered his former spirits; if such a term may be employed to express the state in which he had left the city. He had his bottle often at his mouth; roared out snatches of songs, without the least regard to time or tune or voice, or anything but loud discordance; and urged his silent friend to be merry with him.

"You're the best company in the world, my good fellow," said Montague with an effort, "and in general irresistible; but to-night—do you hear it?"

"Ecod I hear and see it too," cried Jonas, shading his eyes, for the moment, from the lightning which was flashing, not in any one direction,

but all round them. "What of that? It don't change you, nor me, nor our affairs. Chorus, chorus!"

It may lighten and storm,
Till it hunt the red worm
From the grass where the gibbet is driven;
But it can't hurt the dead,
And it won't save the head
That is doom'd to be rifled and riven.

That must be a precious old song," he added with an oath, as he stopped short in a kind of wonder at himself. "I haven't heard it since I was a boy, and how it comes into my head now, unless the lightning put it there, I don't know. 'Can't hurt the dead'! No no. 'And won't save the head'! No no. No! Ha ha ha!"

His mirth was of such a savage and extraordinary character, and was, in an inexplicable way, at once so suited to the night, and yet such a coarse intrusion on its terrors, that his fellow-traveller, always a coward, shrunk from him in positive fear. Instead of Jonas being his tool and instrument, their places seemed to be reversed. But there was reason for this too, Montague thought; since the sense of his debasement might naturally inspire such a man with the wish to assert a noisy independence, and in that license to forget his real condition. Being quick enough in reference to such subjects of contemplation, he was not long in taking this argument into account, and giving it its full weight. But still he felt a vague sense of alarm, and was depressed and uneasy.

He was certain he had not been asleep; but his eyes might have deceived him, for looking at Jonas now, in any interval of darkness, he could represent his figure to himself in any attitude: his state of mind suggested. On the other hand, he knew full well that Jonas had no reason to love him; and even taking the piece of pantomime which had so impressed his mind to be a real gesture, and not the working of his fancy, the most that could be said of it was, that it was quite in keeping with the rest of his diabolical fun, and had the same impotent expression of truth in it. "If he could kill me with a wish," thought the swindler, "I should not live long."

He resolved, that when he should have had his use of Jonas, he would restrain him with an iron curb: in the mean time, that he could not do better than leave him to take his own way, and preserve his own peculiar description of good-humour, after his own uncommon manner. It was no great sacrifice to bear with him; "for when all is got that can be got," thought Montague, "I shall decamp across the water, and have the laugh on my side—and the gains."

Such were his reflections from hour to hour; his state of mind being one in which the same thoughts constantly present themselves over and over again in wearisome repetition; while Jonas, who appeared to have dismissed reflection altogether, entertained himself as before. They agreed that they would go to Salisbury, and would cross to Mr. Pecksniff's in the morning; and at the prospect of deluding that worthy gentleman, the spirits of his amiable son-in-law became more boisterous than ever.

As the night wore on, the thunder died away, but still rolled gloomily and mournfully in the distance. The lightning too, though now comparatively harmless, was yet bright and frequent. The rain was quite as violent as it had ever been.

It was their ill-fortune, at about the time of dawn and in the last stage of their journey, to have a restive pair of horses. These animals had been greatly terrified in their stable by the tempest; and coming out into the dreary interval between night and morning, when the glare of the lightning was yet unsubdued by day, and the various objects in their view were presented in indistinct and exaggerated shapes which they would not have worn by night, they gradually became less and less capable of controul; until, taking a sudden fright at something by the roadside, they dashed off wildly down a steep hill, flung the driver from his saddle, drew the carriage to the brink of a ditch, stumbled headlong down, and threw it crashing over.

The travellers had opened the carriage door, and had either jumped or fallen out. Jonas was the first to stagger to his feet. He felt sick and weak, and very giddy, and, reeling to a five-barred gate, stood holding by it: looking drowsily about, as the whole landscape swam before his eyes. But by degrees he grew more conscious, and presently observed that Montague was lying senseless in the road, within a few feet of the horses.

In an instant, as if his own faint body were suddenly animated by a demon, he ran to the horses' heads; and pulling at their bridles with all his force, set them struggling and plunging with such mad violence as brought their hoofs at every effort nearer to the skull of the prostrate man, and must have led in half a minute to his brains being dashed out on the highway.

As he did this, he fought and contended with them like a man possessed: making them wilder by his cries.

"Whoop!" cried Jonas. "Whoop! again! another! A little more, a little more! Up, ye devils! Hillo!"

As he heard the driver who had risen and was hurrying up, crying to him to desist, his violence increased.

"Hillo! Hillo!" cried Jonas.

"For God's sake!" cried the driver.—"The gentleman—in the road—he'll be killed!"

The same shouts and the same struggles were his only answer. But the man darting in at the peril of his own life, saved Montague's, by dragging him through the mire and water out of the reach of present harm. That done he ran to Jonas; and with the aid of his knife they very shortly disengaged the horses from the broken chariot, and got them, cut and bleeding, on their legs again. The postillion and Jonas had now leisure to look at each other, which they had not had yet.

"Presence of mind, presence of mind!" cried Jonas, throwing up his hands wildly. "What would you have done without me!"

"The other gentleman would have done badly without *me*," returned the man, shaking his head. "You should have moved him first. I gave him up for dead."

"Presence of mind, you croaker, presence of mind!" cried Jonas, with a harsh loud laugh. "Was he struck, do you think?"

They both turned to look at him. Jonas muttered something to himself, when he saw him sitting up beneath the hedge, looking vacantly round.

"What's the matter?" asked Montague. "Is anybody hurt?"

"Ecod!" said Jonas, "it don't seem so. There are no bones broke, after all."

They raised him, and he tried to walk. He was a good deal shaken, and trembled very much. But with the exception of a few cuts and bruises, this was all the damage he had sustained.

"Cuts and bruises, eh?" said Jonas. "We've all got them. Only cuts and bruises, eh?"

"I wouldn't have given sixpence for the gentleman's head in half a dozen seconds more, for all he's only cut and bruised," observed the post-boy. "If ever you're in an accident of this sort again, Sir; which I hope you won't be; never you pull at the bridle of a horse that's down, when there's a man's head in the way. That can't be done twice without there being a dead man in the case; it would have ended in that, this time, as sure as ever you were born, if I hadn't come up just when I did."

Jonas replied by advising him with a curse to hold his tongue, and to go somewhere, whither he was not very likely to go of his own accord. But Montague, who had listened eagerly, to every word, himself diverted the subject, by exclaiming: "Where's the boy!"

"Ecod, I forgot that monkey," said Jonas. "What's become of him!"

A very brief search settled that question. The unfortunate Mr. Bailey had been thrown sheer over the hedge or the five barred gate; and was lying in the neighbouring field, to all appearance dead.

"When I said to-night, that I wished I had never started on this journey," cried his master, "I knew it was an ill-fated one. Look at this boy!"

"Is that all?" growled Jonas. "If you call *that* a sign of it —"

"Why, what should I call a sign of it?" asked Montague, hurriedly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Jonas, stooping down over the body, "that I never heard you were his father, or had any particular reason to care much about him. Halloa. Hold up here!"

But the boy was past holding up, or being held up, or giving any other sign of life, than a faint and fitful beating of the heart. After some discussion, the driver mounted the horse which had been least injured, and took the lad in his arms, as well as he could; while Montague and Jonas leading the other horse, and carrying a trunk between them, walked by his side towards Salisbury.

"You'd get there in a few minutes, and be able to send assistance to meet us, if you went forward, post-boy," said Jonas. "Trot on!"

"No, no," cried Montague, hastily; "we'll keep together."

"Why, what a chicken you are! You are not afraid of being robbed; are you?" said Jonas.

"I am not afraid of anything," replied the other, whose looks and manner were in flat contradiction to his words. "But we'll keep together."

"You were mighty anxious about the boy, a minute ago," said Jonas. "I suppose you know that he may die in the mean time?"

"Aye, aye. I know. But we'll keep together."

As it was clear that he was not to be moved from this determination, Jonas made no other rejoinder than such as his face expressed ; and they proceeded in company. They had three or four good miles to travel ; and the way was not made easier by the state of the road, the burden by which they were embarrassed, or their own stiff and sore condition. After a sufficiently long and painful walk, they arrived at the Inn ; and having knocked the people up (it being yet very early in the morning), sent out messengers to see to the carriage and its contents, and roused a surgeon from his bed to tend the chief sufferer. All the service he could render, he rendered promptly and skilfully. But he gave it as his opinion that the boy was labouring under a severe concussion of the brain, and that Mr. Bailey's mortal course was run.

If Montague's strong interest in the announcement could have been considered as unselfish, in any degree ; it might have been a redeeming trait in a character that had no such lineaments to spare. But it was not difficult to see that for some unexpressed reason best appreciated by himself, he attached a strange value to the company and presence of this mere child. When, after receiving some assistance from the surgeon himself, he retired to the bed-room prepared for him, and it was broad day, his mind was still dwelling on this theme.

"I would rather have lost," he said, "a thousand pounds than lost the boy just now. But I'll return home alone ; I am resolved upon that. Chuzzlewit shall go forward first, and I will follow in my own time. I'll have no more of this," he added, wiping his damp forehead. "Twenty-four hours of this would turn my hair gray !"

After examining his chamber, and looking under the bed, and in the cupboards, and even behind the curtains, with unusual caution ; although it was, as has been said, broad day ; he double-locked the door by which he had entered, and retired to rest. There was another door in the room, but it was locked on the outer side ; and with what place it communicated, he knew not.

His fears or evil conscience reproduced this door in all his dreams. He dreamed that a dreadful secret was connected with it : a secret which he knew, and yet did not know, for although he was heavily responsible for it, and a party to it, he was harassed even in his vision by a distracting uncertainty in reference to its import. Incoherently entwined with this dream was another, which represented it as the hiding-place of an enemy, a shadow, a phantom ; and made it the business of his life to keep the terrible creature closed up, and prevent it from forcing its way in upon him. With this view Nadgett, and he, and a strange man with a bloody smear upon his head (who told him that he had been his playfellow, and told him, too, the real name of an old school-mate, forgotten until then), worked with iron plates and nails to make

the door secure ; but though they worked never so hard, it was all in vain, for the nails broke, or changed to soft twigs, or, what was worse, to worms, between their fingers ; the wood of the door splintered and crumbled, so that even nails would not remain in it ; and the iron plates curled up like hot paper. All this time the creature on the other side—whether it was in the shape of man, or beast, he neither knew nor sought to know—was gaining on them. But his greatest terror was when the man with the bloody smear upon his head demanded of him if he knew this creature's name, and said that he would whisper it. At this the dreamer fell upon his knees, his whole blood thrilling with inexplicable fear, and held his ears. But looking at the speaker's lips, he saw that they formed the utterance of the letter "J ;" and crying out aloud that the secret was discovered, and they were all lost, he awoke.

Awoke to find Jonas standing at his bedside watching him. And that very door wide open.

As their eyes met, Jonas retreated a few paces, and Montague sprang out of bed.

"Heyday !" said Jonas. "You're all alive this morning."

"Alive !" the other stammered, as he pulled the bell-rope violently : "What are you doing here ?"

"It's your room to be sure," said Jonas ; "but I'm almost inclined to ask you what *you* are doing here. My room is on the other side of that door. No one told me last night not to open it. I thought it led into a passage, and was coming out to order breakfast. There's—there's no bell in my room."

Montague had in the mean time admitted the man with his hot water and boots, who hearing this, said, yes, there was ; and passed into the adjoining room to point it out, at the head of the bed.

"I couldn't find it, then," said Jonas : "it's all the same. Shall I order breakfast ?"

Montague answered in the affirmative. When Jonas had retired, whistling, through his own room, he opened the door of communication, to take out the key and fasten it on the inner side. But it was taken out already.

He dragged a table against the door and sat down to collect himself, as if his dreams still had some influence upon his mind.

"An evil journey," he repeated several times. "An evil journey. But I'll travel home alone. I'll have no more of this !"

His presentiment, or superstition, that it was an evil journey, did not at all deter him from doing the evil for which the journey was undertaken. With this in view, he dressed himself more carefully than usual, to make a favourable impression on Mr. Pecksniff : and, reassured by his own appearance, the beauty of the morning, and the flashing of the wet boughs outside his window in the merry sunshine, he was soon sufficiently inspirited to swear a few round oaths, and hum the fag-end of a song.

But he still muttered to himself at intervals, for all that : "I'll travel home alone !"

CHAPTER XLIII.

HAS AN INFLUENCE ON THE FORTUNES OF SEVERAL PEOPLE. MR. PECK-SNIFF IS EXHIBITED IN THE PLENITUDE OF POWER; AND WIELDS THE SAME WITH FORTITUDE AND MAGNANIMITY.

ON the night of the storm, Mrs. Lupin, hostess of the Blue Dragon, sat by herself in her little bar. Her solitary condition, or the bad weather, or both united, made Mrs. Lupin thoughtful, not to say sorrowful; and as she sat with her chin upon her hand, looking out through a low back lattice, rendered dim in the brightest day-time by clustering vine-leaves, she shook her head very often, and said, "Dear me! ah, dear, dear me!"

It was a melancholy time, even in the snugness of the Dragon bar. The rich expanse of corn-field, pasture-land, green slope, and gentle undulation, with its sparkling brooks, its many hedgerows, and its clumps of beautiful trees, was black and dreary, from the diamond panes of the lattice away to the far horizon, where the thunder seemed to roll along the hills. The heavy rain beat down the tender branches of vine and jessamine, and trampled on them in its fury; and when the lightning gleamed, it showed the tearful leaves shivering and cowering together at the window, and tapping at it urgently, as if beseeching to be sheltered from the dismal night.

As a mark of her respect for the lightning, Mrs. Lupin had removed her candle to the chimney-piece. Her basket of needlework stood unheeded at her elbow; her supper, spread on a round table not far off, was untasted; and the knives had been removed for fear of attraction. She had sat for a long time with her chin upon her hand, saying to herself at intervals, "Dear me! Ah, dear, dear me!"

She was on the eve of saying so, once more, when the latch of the house-door (closed to keep the rain out), rattled on its well-worn catch, and a traveller came in, who, shutting it after him, and walking straight up to the half-door of the bar, said, rather gruffly:

"A pint of the best old beer here."

He had some reason to be gruff, for if he had passed the day in a waterfall, he could scarcely have been wetter than he was. He was wrapped up to the eyes in a rough blue sailor's coat, and had an oil-skin hat on, from the capacious brim of which, the rain fell trickling down upon his breast, and back, and shoulders. Judging from a certain liveliness of chin—he had so pulled down his hat, and pulled up his collar, to defend himself from the weather, that she could only see his chin, and even across that he drew the wet sleeve of his shaggy coat, as she looked at him—Mrs. Lupin set him down for a good-natured fellow, too.

"A bad night!" observed the hostess cheerfully.

The traveller shook himself like a Newfoundland dog, and said it was, rather.

"There's a fire in the kitchen," said Mrs. Lupin, "and very good company there. Hadn't you better go and dry yourself?"

"No, thankee," said the man, glancing towards the kitchen as he spoke: he seemed to know the way.

"It's enough to give you your death of cold," observed the hostess.

"I don't take my death easy," returned the traveller; "or I should most likely have took it afore to-night. Your health, ma'am!"

Mrs. Lupin thanked him; but in the act of lifting the tankard to his mouth, he changed his mind, and put it down again. Throwing his body back, and looking about him stiffly, as a man does who is wrapped up, and has his hat low down over his eyes, he said,

"What do you call this house? Not the Dragon, do you?"

Mrs. Lupin complacently made answer, "Yes, the Dragon."

"Why, then, you've got a sort of relation of mine here, ma'am," said the traveller: "a young man of the name of Tapley. What! Mark, my boy!" apostrophising the premises, "have I come upon you at last, old buck!"

This was touching Mrs. Lupin on a tender point. She turned to trim the candle on the chimney-piece, and said, with her back towards the traveller:

"Nobody should be made more welcome at the Dragon, master, than any one who brought me news of Mark. But it's many and many a long day and month since he left here and England. And whether he's alive or dead, poor fellow, Heaven above us only knows!"

She shook her head, and her voice trembled; her hand must have done so too, for the light required a deal of trimming.

"Where did he go, ma'am?" asked the traveller, in a gentler voice.

"He went," said Mrs. Lupin, with increased distress, "to America. He was always tender-hearted and kind, and perhaps at this moment may be lying in prison under sentence of death, for taking pity on some miserable black, and helping the poor runaway creetur to escape. How could he ever go to America! Why didn't he go to some of those countries which are not quite barbarous; where the savages eat each other fairly, and give an equal chance to every one!"

Quite subdued by this time, Mrs. Lupin sobbed, and was retiring to a chair to give her grief free vent, when the traveller caught her in his arms, and she uttered a glad cry of recognition.

"Yes, I will!" cried Mark, "another—one more—twenty more! You didn't know me in that hat and coat? I thought you would have known me anywhere! Ten more!"

"So I should have known you, if I could have seen you; but I couldn't, and you spoke so gruff. I didn't think you could speak gruff to me, Mark, at first coming back."

"Fifteen more!" said Mr. Tapley. "How handsome and how young you look! Six more! The last half-dozen warn't a fair one, and must be done over again. Lord bless you, what a treat it is to see you! One more! Well, I never was so jolly. Just a few more, on account of there not being any credit in it!"

When Mr. Tapley stopped in these calculations in simple addition,

he did it, not because he was at all tired of the exercise, but because he was out of breath. The pause reminded him of other duties.

"Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit's outside," he said. "I left him under the cart-shed, while I came on to see if there was anybody here. We want to keep quiet to-night, 'till we know the news from you, and what it's best for us to do."

"There's not a soul in the house except the kitchen company," returned the hostess. "If they were to know you had come back, Mark, they'd have a bonfire in the street, late as it is."

"But they mustn't know it to-night, my precious soul," said Mark : "so have the house shut, and the kitchen fire made up ; and when it's all ready, put a light in the winder, and we'll come in. One more ! I long to hear about old friends. You'll tell me all about 'em, won't you : Mr. Pinch, and the butcher's dog down the street, and the terrier over the way, and the wheelwright's, and every one of 'em. When I first caught sight of the church to-night, I thought the steeple would have choked me, I did. One more ! Won't you ? Not a very little one to finish off with ?"

"You have had plenty, I am sure," said the hostess. "Go along with your foreign manners !"

"That aint foreign, bless you !" cried Mark. "Native as oysters, that is ! One more, because it's native ! As a mark of respect for the land we live in ! This don't count as between you and me, you understand," said Mr. Tapley. "I a'n't a kissin' you now, you'll observe. I have been among the patriots : I'm a kissin' my country."

It would have been very unreasonable to complain of the exhibition of his patriotism with which he followed up this explanation, that it was all lukewarm or indifferent. When he had given full expression to his nationality, he hurried off to Martin ; while Mrs. Lupin, in a state of great agitation and excitement, prepared for their reception.

The company soon came tumbling out : insisting to each other that the Dragon clock was half an hour too fast, and that the thunder must have affected it. Impatient, wet, and weary, though they were, Martin and Mark were overjoyed to see these old faces, and watched them with delighted interest, as they departed from the house, and passed close by them.

"There's the old tailor, Mark !" whispered Martin.

"There he goes, Sir ! A little bandyer than he was, I think, Sir, aint he ? His figure's so far altered, as it seems to me, that you might wheel a rather larger barrow between his legs as he walks, than you could have done conveniently, when we know'd him. There's Sam a coming out, Sir."

"Ah, to be sure !" cried Martin : "Sam, the hostler. I wonder whether that horse of Pecksniff's is alive still ?"

"Not a doubt on it, Sir," returned Mark. "That's a description of animal, Sir, as will go on in a bony way peculiar to himself for a long time, and get into the newspapers at last under the title of 'Sing'lar Tenacity of Life in a Quadruped.' As if he had ever been alive in all his life, worth mentioning ! There's the clerk, Sir,—very drunk, as usual."

"I see him!" said Martin, laughing. "But, my life, how wet you are, Mark!"

"I am! What do you consider yourself, Sir?"

"Oh, not half as bad," said his fellow-traveller, with an air of great vexation. "I told you not to keep on the windy side, Mark, but to let us change and change about. The rain has been beating on you, ever since it began."

"You don't know how it pleases me, Sir," said Mark, after a short silence: "if I may make so bold as say so, to hear you a going on in that there uncommon considerate way of yours; which I don't mean to attend to, never, but which, ever since that time when I was flooded in Eden, you have shewed."

"Ah Mark!" sighed Martin, "the less we say of that the better. Do I see the light yonder?"

"That's the light!" cried Mark. "Lord bless her, what briskness she possesses! Now for it, sir. Neat wines, good beds, and first-rate entertainment for man or beast."

The kitchen fire burnt clear and red, the table was spread out, the kettle boiled, the slippers were there, the boot-jack too, sheets of ham were cooking on the gridiron, half-a-dozen eggs were poaching in the frying-pan; a plethoric cherry-brandy bottle was winking at a foaming jug of beer upon the table; rare provisions were dangling from the rafters as if you had only to open your mouth, and something exquisitely ripe and good would be but too glad of the excuse for tumbling into it. Mrs. Lupin, who for their sakes had dislodged the very cook, high priestess of the temple, with her own genial hands was dressing their repast.

It was impossible to help it—a ghost must have hugged her. The Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea being, in that respect, all one, Martin hugged her instantly. Mr. Tapley (as if the idea were quite novel, and had never occurred to him before), followed, with much gravity, on the same side.

"Little did I ever think," said Mrs. Lupin, adjusting her cap and laughing heartily; yes, and blushing too; "often as I have said that Mr. Pecksniff's young gentlemen were the life and soul of the Dragon, and that without them it would be too dull to live in—little did I ever think, I am sure, that any one of them would ever make so free as you, Mr. Martin! And still less that I shouldn't be angry with him, but should be glad with all my heart, to be the first to welcome him home from America, with Mark Tapley, for his —"

"For his friend, Mrs. Lupin," interposed Martin hastily.

"For his friend," said the hostess, evidently gratified by this distinction, but at the same time admonishing Mr. Tapley with a fork, to remain at a respectful distance. "Little did I ever think that! But still less, that I should ever have the changes to relate that I shall have to tell you of, when you have done your supper!"

"Good Heaven!" cried Martin, changing colour, "What changes?"

"*She*," said the hostess, "is quite well, and now at Mr. Pecksniff's. Don't be at all alarmed about her. She is everything you could wish.

It's of no use mincing matters or making secrets, is it?" added Mrs. Lupin. "I know all about it, you see!"

"My good creature," returned Martin, "you are exactly the person who ought to know all about it. I am delighted to think you *do* know all about it. But what changes do you hint at? Has any death occurred?"

"No, no!" said the hostess. "Not so bad as that. But I declare now that I will not be drawn into saying another word till you have had your supper. If you ask me fifty questions in the mean time, I won't answer one."

She was so positive that there was nothing for it but to get the supper over as quickly as possible; and as they had been walking a great many miles, and had fasted since the middle of the day, they did no great violence to their own inclinations in falling on it tooth and nail. It took rather longer to get through than might have been expected; for, half-a-dozen times, when they thought they had finished, Mrs. Lupin exposed the fallacy of that impression triumphantly. But at last, in the course of time and nature, they gave in. Then, sitting with their slippered feet stretched out upon the kitchen hearth (which was wonderfully comforting, for the night had grown by this time raw and chilly), and looking with involuntary admiration at their dimpled, buxom, blooming hostess, as the firelight sparkled in her eyes and glimmered in her raven hair, they composed themselves to listen to her news.

Many were the exclamations of surprise which interrupted her, when she told them of the separation between Mr. Pecksniff and his daughters, and between the same good gentleman and Mr. Pinch. But these were nothing to the indignant demonstrations of Martin, when she related, as the common talk of the neighbourhood, what entire possession he had obtained over the mind and person of old Mr. Chuzzlewit, and what high honour he designed for Mary. On receipt of this intelligence, Martin's slippers flew off in a twinkling, and he began pulling on his wet boots with that indefinite intention of going somewhere instantly, and doing something to somebody, which is the first safety-valve of a hot temper.

"He!" said Martin, "smooth-tongued villain that he is! He! Give me that other boot, Mark!"

"Where was you a thinking of going to, sir?" inquired Mr. Tapley, drying the sole at the fire, and looking coolly at it as he spoke, as if it were a slice of toast.

"Where!" repeated Martin. "You don't suppose I am going to remain here, do you?"

The imperturbable Mark confessed that he did.

"You do!" retorted Martin angrily. "I am much obliged to you. What do you take me for?"

"I take you for what you are, sir," said Mark; "and, consequently, am quite sure that whatever you do, will be right and sensible. The boot, sir."

Martin darted an impatient look at him, without taking it, and walked rapidly up and down the kitchen several times, with one boot and a stocking on. But, mindful of his Eden resolution, he had already

gained many victories over himself when Mark was in the case, and he resolved to conquer now. So he came back to the boot-jack, laid his hand on Mark's shoulder to steady himself, pulled the boot off, picked up his slippers, put them on, and sat down again. He could not help thrusting his hands to the very bottom of his pockets, and muttering at intervals, "Pecksniff too! That fellow! Upon my soul! In-deed! What next?" and so forth: nor could he help occasionally shaking his fist at the chimney, with a very threatening countenance: but this did not last long; and he heard Mrs. Lupin out, if not with composure, at all events in silence.

"As to Mr. Pecksniff himself," observed the hostess in conclusion, spreading out the skirts of her gown with both hands, and nodding her head a great many times as she did so, "I don't know what to say. Somebody must have poisoned his mind, or influenced him in some extraordinary way. I cannot believe that such a noble-spoken gentleman would go and do wrong of his own accord!"

How many people are there in the world, who, for no better reason, uphold their Pecksniffs to the last, and abandon virtuous men, when Pecksniffs breathe upon them!

"As to Mr. Pinch," pursued the landlady, "if ever there was a dear, good, pleasant, worthy, soul alive, Pinch, and no other, is his name. But how do we know that old Mr. Chuzzlewit himself was not the cause of difference arising between him and Mr. Pecksniff? No one but themselves can tell: for Mr. Pinch has a proud spirit, though he has such a quiet way; and when he left us, and was so sorry to go, he scorned to make his story good, even to me."

"Poor old Tom!" said Martin, in a tone that sounded like remorse.

"It's a comfort to know," resumed the landlady, "that he has his sister living with him, and is doing well. Only yesterday he sent me back, by post, a little"—here the colour came into her cheeks—"a little trifle I was bold enough to lend him when he went away: saying, with many thanks, that he had good employment, and didn't want it. It was the same note; he hadn't broken it. I never thought I could have been so little pleased to see a bank-note come back to me, as I was to see that."

"Kindly said, and heartily!" said Martin. "Is it not, Mark?"

"She can't say anything as does not possess them qualities," returned Mr. Tapley; "which as much belong to the Dragon as its license. And now that we have got quite cool and fresh, to the subject again, Sir: what will you do? If you're not proud, and can make up your mind to go through with what you spoke of, coming along, that's the course for you to take. If you started wrong with your grandfather: (which, you'll excuse my taking the liberty of saying, appears to have been the case), up with you, Sir, and tell him so, and make an appeal to his affections. Don't stand out. He's a great deal older than you, and if he was hasty, you was hasty too: Give way, Sir, give way."

The eloquence of Mr. Tapley was not without its effect on Martin, but he still hesitated, and expressed his reason thus:

"That's all very true, and perfectly correct, Mark ; and if it were a mere question of humbling myself before *him*, I would not consider it twice. But don't you see, that being wholly under this hypocrite's government, and having (if what we hear be true) no mind or will of his own, I throw myself, in fact, not at his feet, but at the feet of Mr. Pecksniff? And when I am rejected and spurned away," said Martin, turning crimson at the thought, "it is not by him : my own blood stirred against me : but by Pecksniff—Pecksniff, Mark !"

"Well, but we know beforehand," returned the politic Mr. Tapley, "that Pecksniff is a wagabond, a scoundrel, and a villain."

"A most pernicious villain!" said Martin.

"A most pernicious villain. We know that beforehand, sir ; and, consequently, it's no shame to be defeated by Pecksniff. Blow Pecksniff!" cried Mr. Tapley, in the fervour of his eloquence. "Who's he! It's not in the natur of Pecksniff to shame *us*, unless he agreed with us, or done us a service ; and, in case he offered any outdacity of that description, we could express our sentiments in the English language, I hope? Pecksniff!" repeated Mr. Tapley, with ineffable disdain. "What's Pecksniff, who's Pecksniff, where's Pecksniff, that he's to be so much considered? We're not a calculating for ourselves;" he laid uncommon emphasis on the last syllable of that word, and looked full in Martin's face ; "we're making a effort for a young lady likewise as has undergone her share ; and whatever little hope we have, this here Pecksniff is not to stand in its way, I expect. I never heerd of any act of Parliament as was made by Pecksniff. Pecksniff! Why, I wouldn't see the man myself ; I wouldn't hear him ; I wouldn't choose to know he was in company. I'd scrape my shoes on the scraper of the door, and call that Pecksniff, if you liked ; but I wouldn't condescend no further."

The amazement of Mrs. Lupin, and indeed of Mr. Tapley himself for that matter, at this impassioned flow of language, was immense. But Martin, after looking thoughtfully at the fire for a short time, said :

"You are right, Mark. Right or wrong, it shall be done. I'll do it."

"One word more Sir," returned Mark. "Only think of him so far, as not to give him a handle against you. Don't you do anything secret, that he can report before you get there. Don't you even see Miss Mary in the morning, but let this here dear friend of ours;" Mr. Tapley bestowed a smile upon the hostess ; "prepare her for what's a going to happen, and carry any little message as may be agreeable. She knows how. Don't you?" Mrs. Lupin laughed and tossed her head. "Then you go in, bold and free as a gentleman should. 'I haven't done nothing under-handed,' says you. 'I haven't been a skulking about the premises, here I am, for-give me, I ask your pardon, God Bless You!'"

Martin smiled, but felt that it was good advice notwithstanding, and resolved to act upon it. When they had ascertained from Mrs. Lupin that Pecksniff had already returned from the great ceremonial at which they had beheld him in his glory ; and when they had fully arranged the order of their proceedings ; they went to bed, intent upon the morrow.

In pursuance of their project as agreed upon at this discussion, Mr.

Tapley issued forth next morning, after breakfast, charged with a letter from Martin to his grandfather, requesting leave to wait upon him for a few minutes. And postponing as he went along the congratulations of his numerous friends until a more convenient season, he soon arrived at Mr. Pecksniff's house. At that gentleman's door : with a face so immovable that it would have been next to an impossibility for the most acute physiognomist to determine what he was thinking about, or whether he was thinking at all : he straightway knocked.

A person of Mr. Tapley's observation could not long remain insensible to the fact, that Mr. Pecksniff was making the end of his nose very blunt against the glass of the parlour window, in an angular attempt to discover who had knocked at the door. Nor was Mr. Tapley slow to baffle this movement on the part of the enemy, by perching himself on the top step, and presenting the crown of his hat in that direction. But possibly Mr. Pecksniff had already seen him, for Mark soon heard his shoes creaking, as he advanced to open the door with his own hands.

Mr. Pecksniff was as cheerful as ever, and sang a little song in the passage.

"How d'ye do Sir?" said Mark.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Pecksniff. "Tapley, I believe? The Prodigal returned! We don't want any Beer, my friend."

"Thankee Sir," said Mark. "I couldn't accommodate you, if you did. A letter Sir. Wait for an answer."

"For me?" cried Mr. Pecksniff. "And an answer, eh?"

"Not for you I think Sir," said Mark, pointing out the direction. "Chuzzlewit, I believe the name is, Sir."

"Oh!" returned Mr. Pecksniff. "Thank you. Yes. Who's it from, my good young man?"

"The gentleman it comes from, wrote his name inside Sir," returned Mr. Tapley with extreme politeness. "I see him a signing of it at the end, while I was a waitin'."

"And he said he wanted an answer did he?" asked Mr. Pecksniff in his most persuasive manner.

Mark replied in the affirmative.

"He shall have an answer. Certainly," said Mr. Pecksniff, tearing the letter into small pieces as mildly as if that were the most flattering attention a correspondent could receive. "Have the goodness to give him that, with my compliments, if you please. Good morning!" Whereupon, he handed Mark the scraps; retired; and shut the door.

Mark thought it prudent to subdue his personal emotions, and return to Martin, at the Dragon. They were not unprepared for such a reception, and suffered an hour or so to elapse before making another attempt. When this interval had gone by, they returned to Mr. Pecksniff's house in company. Martin knocked this time, while Mr. Tapley prepared himself to keep the door open with his foot and shoulder, when anybody came, and by that means secure an enforced parley. But this precaution was needless, for the servant-girl appeared almost immediately. Brushing quickly past her as he had resolved in such a case to do, Martin (closely followed by his faithful ally) opened the door of that parlour in which

he knew a visitor was most likely to be found ; passed at once into the room ; and stood, without a word of notice or announcement, in the presence of his grandfather.

Mr. Pecksniff also was in the room ; and Mary. In the swift instant of their mutual recognition, Martin saw the old man droop his gray head, and hide his face in his hands.

It smote him to the heart. In his most selfish and most careless day, this lingering remnant of the old man's ancient love, this buttress of a ruined tower he had built up in the time gone by, with so much pride and hope, would have caused a pang in Martin's heart. But now, changed for the better in his worst respect ; looking through an altered medium on his former friend, the guardian of his childhood, so broken and bowed down ; resentment, sullenness, self-confidence, and pride, were all swept away, before the starting tears upon the withered cheeks. He could not bear to see them. He could not bear to think they fell at sight of him. He could not bear to view reflected in them, the reproachful and irrevocable Past.

He hurriedly advanced, to seize the old man's hand in his, when Mr. Pecksniff interposed himself between them.

"No, young man !" said Mr. Pecksniff, striking himself upon the breast, and stretching out his other arm towards his guest as if it were a wing to shelter him. "No Sir. None of that. Strike here Sir, here ! Launch your arrows at Me sir, if you'll have the goodness ; not at Him !"

"Grandfather !" cried Martin. "Hear me ! I implore you, let me speak !"

"Would you Sir ! Would you !" said Mr. Pecksniff, dodging about, so as to keep himself always between them. "Is it not enough, Sir, that you come into my house like a thief in the night, or I should rather say, for we can never be too particular on the subject of Truth, like a thief in the day-time ; bringing your dissolute companions with you, to plant themselves with their backs against the insides of parlour doors, and prevent the entrance or issuing forth of any of my household ;" Mark had taken up this position, and held it quite unmoved ; "but would you also strike at venerable Virtue ? Would you ? Know that it is not defenceless. I will be its shield young man Assail me. Come on Sir. Fire away !"

"Pecksniff," said the old man, in a feeble voice. "Calm yourself. Be quiet."

"I can't be calm," cried Mr. Pecksniff, "and I won't be quiet. My benefactor and my friend ! Shall even my house be no refuge for your hoary pillow !"

"Stand aside !" said the old man, stretching out his hand ; "and let me see what it is, I used to love so dearly."

"It is right that you should see it, my friend," said Mr. Pecksniff. "It is well that you should see it, my noble Sir. It is desirable that you should contemplate it in its true proportions. Behold it ! There it is Sir. There it is !"

Martin could hardly be a mortal man, and not express in his face, something of the anger and disdain, with which Mr. Pecksniff inspired him. But beyond this he evinced no knowledge whatever of that

gentleman's presence or existence. True, he had once, and that at first, glanced at him involuntarily, and with supreme contempt; but for any other heed he took of him, there might have been nothing in his place save empty air.

As Mr. Pecksniff withdrew from between them, agreeably to the wish just now expressed (which he did, during the delivery of the observations last recorded), old Martin, who had taken Mary Graham's hand in his, and whispered kindly to her, as telling her she had no cause to be alarmed, gently pushed her from him, behind his chair; and looked steadily at his grandson.

"And that," he said, "is he. Ah! that is he! Say what you wish to say. But come no nearer."

"His sense of justice is so fine," said Mr. Pecksniff, "that he will hear even him; although he knows beforehand that nothing can come of it. Ingenuous mind!" Mr. Pecksniff did not address himself immediately to any person in saying this, but assuming the position of the Chorus in a Greek Tragedy, delivered his opinion as a commentary on the proceedings.

"Grandfather!" said Martin, with great earnestness. "From a painful journey, from a hard life, from a sick bed, from privation and distress, from gloom and disappointment, from almost hopelessness and despair, I have come back to you."

"Rovers of this sort," observed Mr. Pecksniff as Chorus, "very commonly come back when they find they don't meet with the success they expected in their marauding ravages."

"But for this faithful man," said Martin, turning towards Mark, "whom I first knew in this place, and who went away with me voluntarily, as a servant, but has been, throughout, my zealous and devoted friend; but for him, I must have died abroad. Far from home, far from any help or consolation; far from the probability even of my wretched fate being ever known to any one who cared to hear it—oh that you would let me say, of being known to you!"

The old man looked at Mr. Pecksniff. Mr. Pecksniff looked at him. "Did you speak my worthy Sir?" said Mr. Pecksniff, with a smile. The old man answered in the negative. "I know what you thought," said Mr. Pecksniff, with another smile. "Let him go on, my friend. The development of self-interest in the human mind is always a curious study. Let him go on, Sir."

"Go on!" observed the old man; in a mechanical obedience, it appeared, to Mr. Pecksniff's suggestion.

"I have been so wretched and so poor," said Martin, "that I am indebted to the charitable help of a stranger in a land of strangers, for the means of returning here. All this tells against me in your mind, I know. I have given you cause to think I have been driven here wholly by want, and have not been led on, in any degree, by affection or regret. When I parted from you, Grandfather, I deserved that suspicion, but I do not now. I do not now."

The Chorus put its hand in its waistcoat, and smiled. "Let him go on, my worthy Sir," it said. "I know what you are thinking of, but don't express it prematurely."

Old Martin raised his eyes to Mr. Pecksniff's face, and appearing to derive renewed instruction from his looks and words, said, once again :

"Go on !"

"I have little more to say," returned Martin. "And as I say it now, with little or no hope, Grandfather ; whatever dawn of hope I had on entering the room ; believe it to be true. At least believe it to be true."

"Beautiful Truth !" exclaimed the Chorus, looking upward. "How is your name profaned by vicious persons ! You don't live in a well, my holy principle, but on the lips of false mankind. It is hard to bear with mankind, dear Sir,"—addressing the elder Mr. Chuzzlewit ; "but let us do so, meekly. It is our duty so to do. Let us be among the Few who do their duty. If," pursued the Chorus, soaring up into a lofty flight, "as the poet informs us, England expects Every man to do his duty, England is the most sanguine country on the face of the earth, and will find itself continually disappointed."

"Upon that subject," said Martin, looking calmly at the old man as he spoke, but glancing once at Mary, whose face was now buried in her hands, upon the back of his easy chair : "upon that subject, which first occasioned a division between us, my mind and heart are incapable of change. Whatever influence they have undergone, since that unhappy time, has not been one to weaken but to strengthen me. I cannot profess sorrow for that, nor irresolution in that, nor shame in that. Nor would you wish me, I know. But that I might have trusted to your love, if I had thrown myself manfully upon it ; that I might have won you over with ease, if I had been more yielding, and more considerate ; that I should have best remembered myself in forgetting myself, and recollecting you ; reflection, solitude, and misery, have taught me. I came resolved to say this, and to ask your forgiveness : not so much in hope for the future, as in regret for the past : for all that I would ask of you, is, that you would aid me to live. Help me to get honest work to do, and I would do it. My condition places me at the disadvantage of seeming to have only my selfish ends to serve, but try if that be so, or not. Try if I be self-willed, obdurate, and haughty, as I was ; or have been disciplined in a rough school. Let the voice of nature and association plead between us, Grandfather ; and do not, for one fault, however thankless, quite reject me !"

As he ceased, the gray head of the old man drooped again ; and he concealed his face behind his outspread fingers.

"My dear Sir," cried Mr. Pecksniff, bending over him, "you must not give way to this. It is very natural, and very amiable, but you must not allow the shameless conduct of one whom you long ago cast off, to move you so far. Rouse yourself. Think," said Mr. Pecksniff, "think of Me, my friend."

"I will," returned old Martin, looking up into his face. "You recall me to myself. I will."

"Why, what," said Mr. Pecksniff, sitting down beside him in a chair which he drew up for the purpose, and tapping him playfully on the arm, "what is the matter with my strong-minded compatriot, if I may

venture to take the liberty of calling him by that endearing expression ? Shall I have to scold my coadjutor, or to reason with an intellect like his ? I think not."

"No, no. There is no occasion," said the old man. "A momentary feeling. Nothing more."

"Indignation," observed Mr. Pecksniff, "*will* bring the scalding tear into the honest eye, I know"—he wiped his own elaborately. "But we have higher duties to perform than that. Rouse yourself, Mr. Chuzzlewit. Shall I give expression to your thoughts, my friend?"

"Yes," said old Martin, leaning back in his chair, and looking at him, half in vacancy and half in admiration, as if he were fascinated by the man. "Speak for me, Pecksniff. Thank you. You are true to me. Thank you!"

"Do not unman me, Sir," said Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his hand vigorously, "or I shall be unequal to the task. It is not agreeable to my feelings, my good Sir, to address the person who is now before us, for when I ejected him from this house, after hearing of his unnatural conduct from your lips, I renounced communication with him for ever. But you desire it ; and that is sufficient. Young man ! The door is immediately behind the companion of your infamy. Blush if you can ; begone without a blush, if you can't."

Martin looked as steadily at his grandfather as if there had been a dead silence all this time. The old man looked no less steadily at Mr. Pecksniff.

"When I ordered you to leave this house upon the last occasion of your being dismissed from it with disgrace," said Mr. Pecksniff : "when, stung and stimulated beyond endurance by your shameless conduct to this extraordinarily noble-minded individual, I exclaimed 'Go forth !' I told you that I wept for your depravity. Do not suppose that the tear which stands in my eye at this moment, is shed for you. It is shed for him, Sir. It is shed for him."

Here Mr. Pecksniff, accidentally dropping the tear in question on a bald part of Mr. Chuzzlewit's head, wiped the place with his pocket-handkerchief, and begged pardon.

"It is shed for him, Sir, whom you seek to make the victim of your arts," said Mr. Pecksniff : "whom you seek to plunder, to deceive, and to mislead. It is shed in sympathy with him, and admiration of him ; not in pity for him, for happily he knows what you are. You shall not wrong him further, Sir, in any way," said Mr. Pecksniff, quite transported with enthusiasm, "while I have Life. You may bestride my senseless corse, sir. That is very likely. I can imagine a mind like yours deriving great satisfaction from any measure of that kind. But while I continue to be called upon to exist, Sir, you must strike at him through me. Aye !" said Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his head at Martin with indignant jocularly ; "and in such a cause you will find me, my young sir, an Ugly Customer !"

Still Martin looked steadily and mildly at his grandfather. "Will you give me no answer," he said, at length, "not a word ?"

"You hear what has been said," replied the old man, without

averting his eyes from the face of Mr. Pecksniff: who nodded encouragingly.

"I have not heard your voice. I have not heard your spirit," returned Martin.

"Tell him again," said the old man, still gazing up in Mr. Pecksniff's face.

"I only hear," replied Martin, strong in his purpose from the first, and stronger in it as he felt how Pecksniff winced and shrunk beneath his contempt; "I only hear what you say to me, grandfather."

Perhaps it was well for Mr. Pecksniff that his venerable friend found in his (Mr. Pecksniff's) features an exclusive and engrossing object of contemplation, for if his eyes had gone astray, and he had compared young Martin's bearing with that of his zealous defender, the latter disinterested gentleman would scarcely have shown to greater advantage than on the memorable afternoon when he took Tom Pinch's last receipt in full of all demands. One really might have thought there was some quality in Mr. Pecksniff—an emanation from the brightness and purity within him perhaps—which set off and adorned his foes: they looked so gallant and so manly beside him.

"Not a word?" said Martin, for the second time.

"I remember that I have a word to say, Pecksniff," observed the old man. "But a word. You spoke of being indebted to the charitable help of some stranger for the means of returning to England. Who is he? And what help, in money, did he render you?"

Although he asked this question of Martin, he did not look towards him, but kept his eyes on Mr. Pecksniff as before. It appeared to have become a habit with him, both in a literal and figurative sense, to look to Mr. Pecksniff alone.

Martin took out his pencil, tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and hastily wrote down the particulars of his debt to Mr. Bevan. The old man stretched out his hand for the paper, and took it; but his eyes did not wander from Mr. Pecksniff's face.

"It would be a poor pride and a false humility," said Martin, in a low voice, "to say, I do not wish that to be paid, or that I have any present hope of being able to pay it. But I never felt my poverty so deeply as I feel it now."

"Read it to me, Pecksniff," said the old man.

Mr. Pecksniff, after approaching the perusal of the paper as if it were a manuscript confession of a murder, complied.

"I think, Pecksniff," said old Martin, "I could wish that to be discharged. I should not like the lender, who was abroad; who had no opportunity of making inquiry, and who did (as he thought) a kind action; to suffer."

"An honourable sentiment, my dear Sir. Your own entirely. But a dangerous precedent," said Mr. Pecksniff, "permit me to suggest."

"It shall not be a precedent," returned the old man. "It is the only recognition of him. But we will talk of it again. You shall advise me. There is nothing else?"

"Nothing else," said Mr. Pecksniff, buoyantly, "but for you to

recover this intrusion : this cowardly and indefensible outrage on your feelings : with all possible dispatch ; and smile again."

"You have nothing more to say ?" enquired the old man, laying his hand with unusual earnestness on Mr. Pecksniff's sleeve.

Mr. Pecksniff would not say what rose to his lips. For reproaches, he observed, were useless.

"You have nothing at all to urge ? You are sure of that ? If you have ; no matter what it is ; speak freely. I will oppose nothing that you ask of me," said the old man.

The tears rose in such abundance to Mr. Pecksniff's eyes at this proof of unlimited confidence on the part of his friend, that he was fain to clasp the bridge of his nose convulsively before he could at all compose himself. When he had the power of utterance again, he said, with great emotion, that he hoped he should live to deserve this ; and added, that he had no other observation whatever to make.

For a few moments the old man sat looking at him, with that blank and motionless expression which is not uncommon in the faces of those whose faculties are on the wane, in age. But he rose up firmly too, and walked towards the door, from which Mark withdrew to make way for him.

The obsequious Mr. Pecksniff proffered his arm. The old man took it. Turning at the door, he said to Martin, waving him off with his hand,

"You have heard him. Go away. It is all over. Go !"

Mr. Pecksniff murmured certain cheering expressions of sympathy and encouragement as they retired ; and Martin, awakening from the stupor into which the closing portion of this scene had plunged him, to the opportunity afforded by their departure, caught the innocent cause of all in his embrace, and pressed her to his heart.

"Dear girl !" said Martin. "He has not changed you. Why, what an impotent and harmless knave the fellow is !"

"You have restrained yourself so nobly ! You have borne so much !"

"Restrained myself !" cried Martin, cheerfully. "You were by, and were unchanged, I knew. What more advantage did I want ? The sight of me was such bitterness to the dog, that I had my triumph in his being forced to endure it. But tell me, love—for the few hasty words we can exchange now, are precious—what is this, which has been rumoured to me ? Is it true that you are persecuted by this knave's addresses."

"I was, dear Martin, and to some extent am now ; but my chief source of unhappiness has been anxiety for you. Why did you leave us in such terrible suspense ?"

"Sickness, distance ; the dread of hinting at our real condition, the impossibility of concealing it except in perfect silence ; the knowledge that the truth would have pained you infinitely more than uncertainty and doubt," said Martin, hurriedly ; as indeed everything else was done and said, in those few hurried moments, "were the causes of my writing only once. But Pecksniff ? You needn't fear to tell me the whole tale : for you saw me with him face to face, hearing him speak, and not taking him by the throat : what is the history of his pursuit of you ? Is it known to my grandfather ?"

"Yes."

"And he assists him in it?"

"No," she answered eagerly.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Martin, "that it leaves his mind unclouded in that one respect!"

"I do not think," said Mary, "it was known to him at first. When this man had sufficiently prepared his mind, he revealed it to him by degrees. I think so, but I only know it, from my own impression: not from anything they told me. Then he spoke to me alone."

"My grandfather did?" said Martin.

"Yes—spoke to me alone, and told me—"

"What the hound had said," cried Martin. "Don't repeat it."

"And said I knew well what qualities he possessed; that he was moderately rich; in good repute; and high in his favour and confidence. But seeing me very much distressed, he said that he would not controul or force my inclinations, but would content himself with telling me the fact. He would not pain me by dwelling on it, or reverting to it: nor has he ever done so since, but has truly kept his word."

"The man himself?" asked Martin.

"He has had few opportunities of pursuing his suit. I have never walked out alone, or remained alone an instant in his presence. Dear Martin, I must tell you," she continued, "that the kindness of your grandfather to me, remains unchanged. I am his companion still. An indescribable tenderness and compassion seem to have mingled themselves with his old regard; and if I were his only child, I could not have a gentler father. What former fancy or old habit survives in this, when his heart has turned so cold to you, is a mystery I cannot penetrate; but it has been, and it is, a happiness to me, that I remained true to him; that if he should wake from his delusion, even at the point of death, I am here, love, to recall you to his thoughts."

Martin looked with admiration on her glowing face, and pressed his lips to hers.

"I have sometimes heard, and read," she said, "that those whose powers had been enfeebled long ago, and whose lives had faded, as it were, into a dream, have been known to rouse themselves before death, and inquire for familiar faces once very dear to them; but forgotten, unrecognised, hated even, in the meantime. Think, if with his old impressions of this man, he should suddenly resume his former self, and find in him his only friend!"

"I would not urge you to abandon him, dearest," said Martin, "though I could count the years we are to wear out asunder. But the influence this fellow exercises over him, has steadily increased, I fear."

She could not help admitting that. Steadily, imperceptibly, and surely, until now it was paramount and supreme. She herself had none; and yet he treated her with more affection than at any previous time. Martin thought the inconsistency a part of his weakness and decay.

"Does the influence extend to fear?" said Martin. "Is he timid of asserting his own opinion in the presence of this infatuation? I fancied so just now."

"I have thought so, often. Often when we are sitting alone, almost as we used to do, and I have been reading a favourite book to him or he has been talking quite cheerfully, I have observed that the entrance of Mr. Pecksniff has changed his whole demeanour. He has broken off immediately, and become what you have seen to-day. When we first came here he had his impetuous outbreaks, in which it was not easy for Mr. Pecksniff with his utmost plausibility to appease him. But these have long since dwindled away. He defers to him in everything, and has no opinion upon any question, but that which is forced upon him by this treacherous man."

Such was the account; rapidly furnished in whispers, and interrupted, brief as it was, by many false alarms of Mr. Pecksniff's return; which Martin received of his grandfather's decline, and of that good gentleman's ascendancy. He heard of Tom Pinch too, and Jonas too, with not a little about himself into the bargain; for though lovers are remarkable for leaving a great deal unsaid on all occasions, and very properly desiring to come back and say it, they are remarkable also for a wonderful power of condensation; and can, in one way or other, give utterance to more language—eloquent language—in any given short space of time, than all the six hundred and fifty-eight members in the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; who are strong lovers, no doubt, but of their country only, which makes all the difference; for in a passion of that kind (which is not always returned), it is the custom to use as many words as possible, and express nothing whatever.

A caution from Mr. Tapley; a hasty interchange of farewells, and of something else which the proverb says must not be told of afterwards; a white hand held out to Mr. Tapley himself, which he kissed with the devotion of a knight-errant; more farewells, more something else's; a parting word from Martin that he would write from London and would do great things there yet (Heaven knows what, but he quite believed it); and Mark and he stood on the outside of the Pecksniffian halls.

"A short interview after such an absence!" said Martin, sorrowfully. "But we are well out of the house. We might have placed ourselves in a false position by remaining there, even so long, Mark."

"I don't know about ourselves, Sir," he returned; "but somebody else would have got into a false position, if he had happened to come back again, while we was there. I had the door all ready, Sir. If Pecksniff had showed his head, or had only so much as listened behind it, I should have caught him like a walnut. He's the sort of man," added Mr. Tapley, musing, "as would squeeze soft, I know."

A person who was evidently going to Mr. Pecksniff's house, passed them at this moment. He raised his eyes at the mention of the architect's name; and when he had gone on a few yards, stopped, and gazed at them. Mr. Tapley, also, looked over his shoulder, and so did Martin; for the stranger, as he passed, had looked very sharply at them.

"Who may that be, I wonder!" said Martin. "The face seems familiar to me, but I don't know the man."

"He seems to have a amiable desire that his face should be tolerable

familiar to us," said Mr. Tapley, "for he's a staring pretty hard. He'd better not waste his beauty, for he aint got much to spare."

Coming in sight of the Dragon, they saw a travelling carriage at the door.

"And a Salisbury carriage, eh!" said Mr. Tapley. "That's what he came in, depend upon it. What's in the wind now? A new pupil, I shouldn't wonder. P'raps it's a order for another grammar-school, of the same pattern as the last."

Before they could enter at the door, Mrs. Lupin came running out; and beckoning them to the carriage showed them a portmanteau with the name of CHUZZLEWIT upon it.

"Miss Pecksniff's husband that was," said the good woman to Martin. "I didn't know what terms you might be on, and was quite in a worry till you came back."

"He and I have never interchanged a word yet," observed Martin; "and as I have no wish to be better or worse acquainted with him, I will not put myself in his way. We passed him on the road, I have no doubt. I am glad he timed his coming, as he did. Upon my word! Miss Pecksniff's husband travels gaily!"

"A very fine-looking gentleman with him—in the best room now," whispered Mrs. Lupin, glancing up at the window as they went into the house. "He has ordered everything that can be got for dinner; and has the glossiest mustaches and whiskers that ever you saw."

"Has he?" cried Martin, "why then we'll endeavour to avoid him too, in the hope that our self-denial may be strong enough for the sacrifice. It is only for a few hours," said Martin, dropping wearily into a chair behind the little screen in the bar. "Our visit has met with no success, my dear Mrs. Lupin, and I must go to London."

"Dear, dear!" cried the hostess.

"Yes. One foul wind no more makes a winter, than one swallow makes a summer.—I'll try it again. Tom Pinch has succeeded. With his advice to guide me, I may do the same. I took Tom under my protection once, God save the mark!" said Martin, with a melancholy smile; "and promised I would make his fortune. Perhaps Tom will take me under *his* protection now, and teach me how to earn my bread."

CHAPTER XLIV. .

FURTHER CONTINUATION OF THE ENTERPRISE OF MR. JONAS AND HIS FRIEND.

It was a special quality, among the many admirable qualities possessed by Mr. Pecksniff, that the more he was found out, the more hypocrisy he practised. Let him be discomfited in one quarter, and he refreshed and recompensed himself by carrying the war into another. If his workings and windings were detected by A, so much the greater reason was there for practising without loss of time on B, if it were only to keep his hand in. He had never been such a saintly and improving

spectacle to all about him, as after his detection by Thomas Pinch. He had scarcely ever been at once so tender in his humanity, and so dignified and exalted in his virtue, as when young Martin's scorn was fresh and hot upon him.

Having this large stock of superfluous sentiment and morality on hand which must positively be cleared off at any sacrifice, Mr. Pecksniff no sooner heard his son-in-law announced, than he regarded him as a kind of wholesale or general order, to be immediately executed. Descending, therefore, swiftly to the parlour, and clasping the young man in his arms, he exclaimed, with looks and gestures that denoted the perturbation of his spirit :

"Jonas ! My child—she is well ? There is nothing the matter ?"

"What you're at it again, are you ?" replied his son-in-law. "Even with me ? Get away with you, will you ?"

"Tell me she is well, then," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Tell me she is well, my Boy !"

"She's well enough," retorted Jonas, disengaging himself. "There's nothing the matter with *her*."

"There is nothing the matter with her !" cried Mr. Pecksniff, sitting down in the nearest chair, and rubbing up his hair. "Fie upon my weakness ! I cannot help it Jonas. Thank you. I am better now. How is my other child ; my eldest ; my Cherrywerrychigo ?" said Mr. Pecksniff, inventing a playful little name for her, in the restored lightness of his heart.

"She's much about the same as usual," returned Mr. Jonas. "She sticks pretty close to the vinegar-bottle. You know she's got a sweetheart, I suppose ?"

"I have heard of it," said Mr. Pecksniff, "from head-quarters ; from my child herself, I will not deny that it moved me to contemplate the loss of my remaining daughter, Jonas—I am afraid we parents are selfish ; I am afraid we are—but it has ever been the study of my life to qualify them for the domestic hearth ; and it is a sphere which Cherry will adorn."

"She need adorn some sphere or other," observed his son-in-law, with charming frankness. "For she aint very ornamental in general."

"My girls are now provided for," said Mr. Pecksniff. "They are now happily provided for ; and I have not laboured in vain !"

This is exactly what Mr. Pecksniff would have said, if one of his daughters had drawn a prize of thirty thousand pounds in the lottery, or the other had picked up a valuable purse in the street, which nobody appeared to claim. In either of these cases, he would have invoked a patriarchal blessing on the fortunate head, with great solemnity, and would have taken immense credit to himself, as having meant it from the infant's cradle.

"Suppose we talk about something else, now," observed Jonas, drily ; "just for a change. Are you quite agreeable ?"

"Quite," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Ah, you wag, you naughty wag ! You laugh at poor old fond papa. Well ! He deserves it. And he don't mind it either, for his feelings are their own reward. You have come to stay with me, Jonas ?"

"No. I've got a friend with me," said Jonas.

"Bring your friend!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, in a gush of hospitality. "Bring any number of your friends!"

"This aint the sort of man to be brought," said Jonas, contemptuously. I think I see myself 'bringing' him to your house, for a treat! Thank'ee all the same; but he's a little too near the top of the tree for that, Pecksniff."

The good man pricked up his ears; his interest was awakened. A position near the top of the tree was greatness, virtue, goodness, sense, genius; or, it should rather be said, a dispensation from all, and in itself something immeasurably better than all; with Mr. Pecksniff. A man who was able to look down upon Mr. Pecksniff could not be looked up at, by that gentleman, with too great an amount of deference, or from a position of too much humility. So it always is with great spirits.

"I'll tell you what you may do, if you like," said Jonas: "you may come and dine with us at the Dragon. We were forced to come down to Salisbury last night, on some business, and I got him to bring me over here this morning, in his carriage; at least, not his own carriage, for we had a break-down in the night, but one we hired instead; it's all the same. Mind what your're about, you know. He's not used to all sorts; he only mixes with the best!"

"Some young nobleman who has been borrowing money of you at good interest, eh?" said Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his forefinger facetiously. "I shall be delighted to know the gay sprig."

"Borrowing!" echoed Jonas. "Borrowing! When you're a twentieth part as rich as he is, you may shut up shop! We should be pretty well off, if we could buy his furniture, and plate, and pictures, by clubbing together. A likely man to borrow: Mr. Montague! Why, since I was lucky enough (come! and I'll say, sharp enough, too) to get a share in the Insurance Office that he's President of, I've made—never mind what I've made," said Jonas, seeming to recover all at once his usual caution. "You know me pretty well, and I don't blab about such things. But, Ecod, I've made a trifle."

"Really, my dear Jonas," cried Mr. Pecksniff, with much warmth, "a gentleman like this should receive some attention. Would he like to see the church? Or if he has a taste for the fine arts—which I have no doubt he has, from the description you give of his circumstances—I can send him down a few portfolios. Salisbury Cathedral, my dear Jonas," said Mr. Pecksniff; the mention of the portfolios, and his anxiety to display himself to advantage, suggesting his usual phraseology in that regard; "is an edifice replete with venerable associations, and strikingly suggestive of the loftiest emotions. It is here we contemplate the work of bygone ages. It is here we listen to the swelling organ, as we stroll through the reverberating aisles. We have drawings of this celebrated structure from the North, from the South, from the East, from the West, from the South-East, from the Nor'-West——"

During this digression, and indeed during the whole dialogue, Jonas had been rocking on his chair, with his hands in his pockets, and his head thrown cunningly on one side. He looked at Mr. Pecksniff

now with such shrewd meaning twinkling in his eyes, that Mr. Pecksniff stopped, and asked him what he was going to say.

"Ecod!" he answered. "Pecksniff, if I knew how you meant to leave your money, I could put you in the way of doubling it, in no time. It wouldn't be bad to keep a chance like this snug in the family. But you're such a deep one!"

"Jonas!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, much affected, "I am not a diplomatical character: my heart is in my hand. By far the greater part of the inconsiderable savings I have accumulated in the course of—I hope—a not dishonourable or useless career, is already given, devised, and bequeathed (correct me, my dear Jonas, if I am technically wrong), with expressions of confidence, which I will not repeat; and in securities which it is unnecessary to mention; to a person, whom I cannot, whom I will not, whom I need not, name." Here he gave the hand of his son-in-law a fervent squeeze, as if he would have added, "God bless you; be very careful of it when you get it!"

Mr. Jonas only shook his head and laughed, and, seeming to think better of what he had had in his mind, said, "No. He would keep his own counsel." But as he observed that he would take a walk, Mr. Pecksniff insisted on accompanying him, remarking that he could leave a card for Mr. Montague, as they went along, by way of gentleman-usher to himself at dinner-time. Which he did.

In the course of their walk, Mr. Jonas affected to maintain that close reserve which had operated as a timely check upon him during the foregoing dialogue. And as he made no attempt to conciliate Mr. Pecksniff, but, on the contrary, was more boorish and rude to him than usual, that gentleman, so far from suspecting his real design, laid himself out to be attacked with advantage. For it is in the nature of a knave to think the tools with which he works indispensable to knavery; and knowing what he would do himself in such a case, Mr. Pecksniff argued, "if this young man wanted anything of me for his own ends, he would be polite and deferential."

The more Jonas repelled him in his hints and inquiries, the more solicitous, therefore, Mr. Pecksniff became to be initiated into the golden mysteries at which he had obscurely glanced. Why should there be cold and worldly secrets, he observed, between relations? What was life without confidence? If the chosen husband of his daughter, the man to whom he had delivered her with so much pride and hope, such bounding and such beaming joy: if he were not a green spot in the barren waste of life, where was that Oasis to be found?

Little did Mr. Pecksniff think on what a very green spot he planted one foot at that moment! Little did he foresee when he said, "All is but dust!" how very shortly he would come down with his own!

Inch by inch, in his grudging and ill-conditioned way: sustained to the life, for the hope of making Mr. Pecksniff suffer in that tender place, the pocket, where Jonas smarted so terribly himself, gave him an additional and malicious interest in the wiles he was set on to practise: inch by inch, and bit by bit, Jonas rather allowed the dazzling prospects of the Anglo-Bengalee establishment to escape him, than

paraded them before his greedy listener. And in the same niggardly spirit, he left Mr. Pecksniff to infer, if he chose (which he *did* choose, of course), that a consciousness of not having any great natural gifts of speech and manner himself, rendered him desirous to have the credit of introducing to Mr. Montague some one who was well endowed in those respects, and so atone for his own deficiencies. Otherwise, he muttered discontentedly, he would have seen his beloved father-in-law "far enough off," before he would have taken him into his confidence.

Primed in this artful manner, Mr. Pecksniff presented himself at dinner-time in such a state of suavity, benevolence, cheerfulness, politeness, and cordiality, as even he had perhaps never attained before. The frankness of the country gentleman, the refinement of the artist, the good-humoured allowance of the man of the world; philanthropy, forbearance, piety, toleration, all blended together in a flexible adaptability to anything and everything; were expressed in Mr. Pecksniff, as he shook hands with the great speculator and capitalist.

"Welcome, respected Sir," said Mr. Pecksniff, "to our humble village! We are a simple people; primitive clods, Mr. Montague; but we can appreciate the honour of your visit, as my dear son-in-law can testify. It is very strange," said Mr. Pecksniff, pressing his hand almost reverentially, "but I seem to know you. That towering forehead, my dear Jonas," said Mr. Pecksniff aside, "and those clustering masses of rich hair—I must have seen you, my dear sir, in the sparkling throng."

Nothing was more probable, they all agreed.

"I could have wished," said Mr. Pecksniff, "to have had the honour of introducing you to an elderly inmate of our house: to the uncle of our friend. Mr. Chuzzlewit, sir, would have been proud indeed to have taken you by the hand."

"Is the gentleman here now?" asked Montague, turning deeply red.

"He is," said Mr. Pecksniff.

"You said nothing about that, Chuzzlewit."

"I didn't suppose you'd care to hear of it," returned Jonas. "You wouldn't care to know him, I can promise you."

"Jonas! my dear Jonas!" remonstrated Mr. Pecksniff. "Really!"

"Oh! it's all very well for you to speak up for him," said Jonas.

"You have nailed him. You'll get a fortune by him."

"Oho! Is the wind in that quarter!" cried Montague. "Ha, ha, ha!" and here they all laughed—especially Mr. Pecksniff.

"No, no!" said that gentleman, clapping his son-in-law playfully upon the shoulder. "You must not believe all that my young relative says, Mr. Montague. You may believe him in official business, and trust him in official business, but you must not attach importance to his flights of fancy."

"Upon my life, Mr. Pecksniff," cried Montague, "I attach the greatest importance to that last observation of his. I trust and hope it's true. Money cannot be turned and turned again quickly enough in the ordinary course, Mr. Pecksniff. There is nothing like building our fortunes on the weaknesses of mankind."

"Oh fie ! Oh fie ! Oh fie, for shame!" cried Mr. Pecksniff. But they all laughed again—especially Mr. Pecksniff.

"I give you my honour that *we* do it," said Montague.

"Oh fie, fie!" cried Mr. Pecksniff. "You are very pleasant. That I am sure you don't! That I am sure you don't! How *can* you, you know?"

Again they all laughed in concert; and again Mr. Pecksniff laughed especially.

This was very agreeable indeed. It was confidential, easy, straightforward: and still left Mr. Pecksniff in the position of being in a gentle way the Mentor of the party. The greatest achievements in the article of cookery that the Dragon had ever performed, were set before them; the oldest and best wines in the Dragon's cellar saw the light on that occasion; a thousand bubbles, indicative of the wealth and station of Mr. Montague in the depths of his pursuits, were constantly rising to the surface of the conversation; and they were as frank and merry as three honest men could be. Mr. Pecksniff thought it a pity; he said so; that Mr. Montague should think lightly of mankind and their weaknesses. He was anxious upon this subject; his mind ran upon it; in one way or other he was constantly coming back to it; he must make a convert of him, he said. And as often as Mr. Montague repeated his sentiment about building fortunes on the weaknesses of mankind, and added frankly, "*We* do it!" just as often Mr. Pecksniff repeated "Oh fie! Oh fie, for shame! I am sure you don't. How *can* you, you know!" laying a greater stress each time on those last words.

The frequent repetition of this playful inquiry on the part of Mr. Pecksniff, led at last to playful answers on the part of Mr. Montague; but after some little sharp-shooting on both sides, Mr. Pecksniff became grave, almost to tears; observing that if Mr. Montague would give him leave, he would drink the health of his young kinsman, Mr. Jonas: congratulating him upon the valuable and distinguished friendship he had formed, but envying him, he would confess, his usefulness to his fellow-creatures. For if he understood the objects of that Institution with which he was newly and advantageously connected—knowing them but imperfectly—they were calculated to do Good; and for his (Mr. Pecksniff's) part, if he could in any way promote them, he thought he would be able to lay his head upon his pillow every night, with an absolute certainty of going to sleep at once.

The transition from this accidental remark (for it was quite accidental, and had fallen from Mr. Pecksniff in the openness of his soul), to the discussion of the subject as a matter of business, was easy. Books, papers, statements, tables, calculations of various kinds, were soon spread out before them; and as they were all framed with one object, it is not surprising that they should all have tended to one end. But still, whenever Montague enlarged upon the profits of the office, and said that as long as there were gulls upon the wing it must succeed, Mr. Pecksniff mildly said "Oh fie!"—and might indeed have remonstrated with him, but that he knew he was joking. Mr. Pecksniff did know he was joking; because he said so.

There never had been before, and there never would be again, such an opportunity for the investment of a considerable sum (the rate of advantage increased in proportion to the amount invested), as at that moment. The only time that had at all approached it, was the time when Jonas had come into the concern; which made him ill-natured now, and inclined him to pick out a doubt in this place, and a flaw in that, and grumblingly to advise Mr. Pecksniff to think better of it. The sum which would complete the proprietorship in this snug concern, was nearly equal to Mr. Pecksniff's whole hoard: not counting Mr. Chuzzlewit, that is to say, whom he looked upon as money in the Bank, the possession of which inclined him the more to make a dash with his own private sprats for the capture of such a whale as Mr. Montague described. The returns began almost immediately, and were immense. The end of it was, that Mr. Pecksniff agreed to become the last partner and proprietor in the Anglo-Bengalee, and made an appointment to dine with Mr. Montague, at Salisbury, on the next day but one, then and there to complete the negotiation.

It took so long to bring the subject to this head, that it was nearly midnight when they parted. When Mr. Pecksniff walked down stairs to the door, he found Mrs. Lupin standing there: looking out.

"Ah, my good friend!" he said: "not a-bed yet! Contemplating the stars, Mrs. Lupin?"

"It's a beautiful starlight night, sir."

"A beautiful starlight night," said Mr. Pecksniff, looking up. "Behold the planets, how they shine! Behold the——those two persons who were here this morning, have left your house, I hope, Mrs. Lupin?"

"Yes, sir. They are gone."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Behold the wonders of the firmament, Mrs. Lupin! How glorious is this scene! When I look up at those shining orbs, I think that each of them is winking to the other to take notice of the vanity of men's pursuits. My fellow-men!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his head in pity; "you are much mistaken; my wormy relatives, you are much deceived! The stars are perfectly contented (I suppose so) in their several spheres. Why are not you? Oh! do not strive and struggle to enrich yourselves, or to get the better of each other, my deluded friends, but look up there, with me!"

Mrs. Lupin shook her head, and heaved a sigh. It was very affecting. "Look up there, with me!" repeated Mr. Pecksniff, stretching out his hand; "with me, an humble individual who is also an Insect like yourselves. Can silver, gold, or precious stones, sparkle like those constellations? I think not. Then do not thirst for silver, gold, or precious stones; but look up there, with me!"

With these words, the good man patted Mrs. Lupin's hand between his own, as if he would have added "think of this, my good woman!" and walked away in a sort of ecstasy or rapture, with his hat under his arm.

Jonas sat in the attitude in which Mr. Pecksniff had left him, gazing moodily at his friend: who, surrounded by a heap of documents, was writing something on an oblong slip of paper.

"You mean to wait at Salisbury over the day after to-morrow, do you, then?" said Jonas.

"You heard our appointment," returned Montague, without raising his eyes. "In any case I should have waited to see after the boy."

They appeared to have changed places again; Montague being in high spirits; and Jonas gloomy and lowering.

"You don't want me, I suppose?" said Jonas.

"I want you to put your name here," he returned, glancing at him with a smile, "as soon as I have filled up the stamp. I may as well have your note of hand for that extra capital. That's all I want. If you wish to go home, I can manage Mr. Pecksniff now, alone. There is a perfect understanding between us."

Jonas sat scowling at him as he wrote, in silence. When he had finished his writing, and had dried it on the blotting-paper in his travelling-desk; he looked up, and tossed the pen towards him.

"What, not a day's grace, not a day's trust, eh?" said Jonas, bitterly. "Not after the pains I have taken with to-night's work?"

"To-night's work was a part of our bargain," replied Montague; "and so was this."

"You drive a hard bargain," said Jonas, advancing to the table. "You know best. Give it here!"

Montague gave him the paper. After pausing as if he could not make up his mind to put his name to it, Jonas dipped his pen hastily in the nearest inkstand, and began to write. But he had scarcely marked the paper when he started back, in a panic.

"Why, what the devil's this?" he said. "It's bloody!"

He had dipped the pen, as another moment shewed, into red ink. But he attached a strange degree of importance to the mistake. He asked how it had come there, who had brought it, why it had been brought; and looked at Montague, at first, as if he thought he had put a trick upon him. Even when he used a different pen, and the right ink, he made some scratches on another paper first, as half-believing they would turn red also.

"Black enough, this time," he said, handing the note to Montague. "Good-bye!"

"Going now! How do you mean to get away from here?"

"I shall cross early in the morning, to the high road, before you are out of bed; and catch the day-coach, going up. Good-bye!"

"You are in a hurry!"

"I have Something to do," said Jonas. "Good-bye!"

His friend looked after him as he went out, in surprise, which gradually gave place to an air of satisfaction and relief.

"It happens all the better. It brings about what I wanted, without any difficulty. I shall travel home alone."

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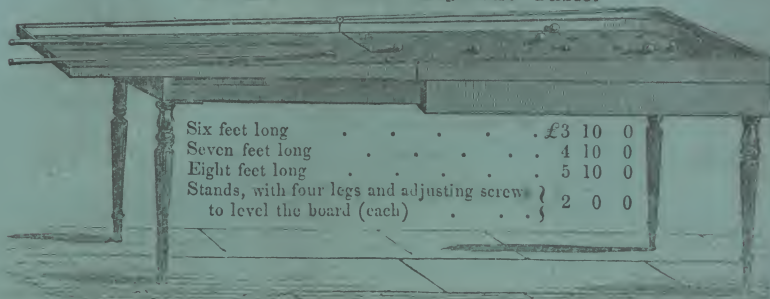
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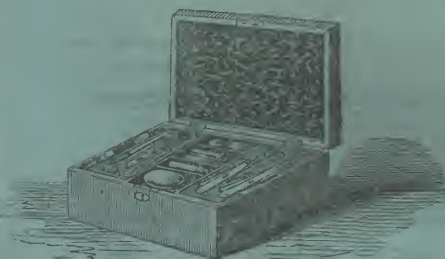
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